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JAPANESE LEATHER PAPERS.

THERE is a feeling as if the Japanese were overloading us with their beautiful productions, and we would certainly get tired of the many articles they send across the Pacific, did they not know how to seduce us with novelties for every new season. The decorations of porcelains and the shapes of vases and jars bear new features each year, and the varieties of embroidering, painting, framing and mounting of the Japanese folding screens seem inexhaustible.

It's true lacquer boxes and trays and the general Japanese bric-à-brac have sunk low in the eyes of connoisseurs of Japanese goods; they are sold in thousands of grocers' and dry goods stores, and can hardly stand in a row with the better class of china, bronzes and screens, which latter seem intent upon keeping up the race with the finest American and European productions.

Japanese goods have become important factors in superior house decoration, and an article which, as the basis of decoration, has made rapid strides lately, is the Japanese leather paper.

Some ten years ago small pieces of an oily smell were imported and sold at prices at which a whole roll of twelve square yards can be obtained for now. Cabinet makers used to fit little panels of this material in the coves of cabinets and other furniture; to use them for the hanging of the four walls of our rooms would have been considered an unpardonable extravagance.

Rottmann, Strome & Co., a Yokohama firm, anticipating a great future for these imitation leathers, engaged some Japanese artists and workmen to produce a few hundred rolls, and then decorators ventured to cut the rolls up and to panel out parts of the walls. The papers proved to be what they were sold for; the bright gold and bronze tints remained unaffected by the gas-light and temperature, they were found strong and durable, and, before all, the most beautiful effects were produced. The above firm found out a process to dispense with the oily substance hitherto employed (from which the papers are still called oil leather papers) and to render the material still tougher.

Hundreds of rolls grew into thousands, and when it was found possible to produce these materials at a cost which allowed competition with the finest French and English papers of similar description, the demand rose to such a height that this one firm is now turning out over 3,000 rolls, equal to 36,000 square yards, per month, and have over 400 numbers to offer in the trade. Nobody will laugh any longer if his decorator suggests to have a few hundred yards of the Japanese papers hung, and several orders for large public buildings, theatres, etc., required 3,000 square yards of two or three patterns.

The Japanese Government Mills, at Tokio, Japan, turned out many thousand rolls, and Rottmann, Strome & Co., who have several private factories of their own in Tokio and Yokohama, work now hand in hand with the government factory as well, and keep many hundred people employed to fill all the orders from various parts of the globe. A specialty is the highly embossed paper, in which form they produce also some imitations of good old Cordovan and Flemish Renaissance leathers.

A great variety of

new colors and designs is now made where crimson and gold grounds used to form four-fifth of the colors originally produced. These gold and bronze effects, gained through various colored washes, which are added after the lacquering process has been gone through, proved very successful.

There is no hollow embossing such as the French leather papers show; a large number of women are employed in padding the larger embossed parts, and thus the material gains the solid and resisting quality.

Though the papers are manufactured from single sheets about two feet long and one yard wide, it is impossible to discover where they are joined. The quick arms of the native workmen hammer these sheets together, as a blacksmith joins two pieces of hot iron, into one solid sheet, and when some fifty or sixty men are observed sitting in a row beating their brushes with vigor and astonishing regularity into the wooden blocks, one imagines one's self in front of a gigantic machine with as many hammers working, and the deafening sound will soon drive one from the long sheds.



PART OF FRIEZE, "THE FOUR SEASONS GAMES," BY ROTTMANN, STROME & CO., YOKOHAMA, JAPAN.

In some papers the colors are stenciled and in some they are picked out by hand. The thickness is regulated by the amount of layers of sheets, some of the stoutest highly embossed papers requiring as many as six or seven layers of pulp sheets. The difficulty of matching different rolls to a shade is gradually overcome, as, by producing large quantities, many rolls can be painted within a few days and are therefore not so much exposed to the sudden changes of the Japanese climate which affect the shades of golds and colors.

The illustrations given herewith show some new designs. An effort that was made to build up the designs on a European basis, but with Japanese details, did not prove a success, and it is found that a design which is Japanese but not "too Japanese," and which is not too extravagant,



FILLING, "THE KYLIN," BY ROTTMAN, STROME & CO., YOKOHAMA, JAPAN.

but forms a good all-over pattern, without being too regular, is the design most desired by architects and decorators.

What may our little neighbors across the wide ocean have still in store for us? As long as they send us true Japanese goods and not imitations, they are welcome with their presents.

THERE are various processes which enrich and vary the effect of gilding. Glazings of transparent color are sometimes applied for the purpose of deadening its luster. Raw sienna passed thinly over a sheet of gold, gives it a leathery appearance. A good effect may be produced by stenciling a small diaper in umber, sienna, or Indian red over gold, especially if foliage or arabesque work is to be painted on the gilding, the small diaper forms affording agreeable relief.

MARINE objects are being drawn on more than ever as types for ornamentation in wood, metal work, and ceramic ware, and with advantage on the score of variety and beauty. Hitherto the sub-aqueous field of design has been too much neglected. The curves and tints of shells, the delicate branching of marine plants, the singular development of coral forms, the general contour and the variedly shaped scales of fish supply manifold features for representative art. Even bracelets in the precious metals are now made of linked shells, and oysters with pearls on their edge dangle as charms.

A VERY useful hint at this time of year, when a housekeeper is putting her house and clothes in order, is to the doing over of black silk. Every one knows silk should not be ironed. Whatever is gained in smoothness is lost in the flimsiness of the silk after the operation. But let the silk be thoroughly wiped off, carefully removing all particles of dust, then dampen it very thoroughly and carefully stretch and pin down the edges as if one was doing up curtains to dry. The result will be entire renovation without deteriorating from the quality of the silk.

GOBELIN TAPESTRY CRETONNES.—What vehicles these for the diffusion of art! The rendering in this tapestry of an Italian scene by Titian,—in which a cavalier is riding off from a manse, his amorita standing on a door step and a peasant girl the artless spectator of the scene, whilst beyond villagers are carousing—is declared by good and competent judges to be a superior rendering of the original than any of the copies in canvas in European galleries or private collections that they have seen. It is the peculiar attribute of well worked tapestry to realize atmospheric effects.

AMONG other objects to which paneling is now artistically applied, are the cases of clocks for drawing and dining-rooms or libraries and halls. Art pottery panels are used, consisting of small white tiles, decorated in blue by hand from original designs. Some of these are in faience, noted for its enameling capacity.

AMONG new colors is one resembling polished elm.